Mr Bakhtiar, to start with, could you tell me how the British were acting in Iran when you yourself were there?

I don't know what the British company was doing a long time ago, but when I arrived in Abadan, it was in '47, '48, there was general discontent, but the new British government, Mr Attlee's Labour Party, had tried to carry out certain reforms, and for the first time there were officials who were in charge of industrial relations - you say industrial relation in English. Naturally, an effort was made over there to improve the lot of the workers, but one must realise that, in general, for the unqualified workers, living conditions were absolutely unbearable.

Was the Company involved in the political scene in Iran? What did you think of that at that time?

It cannot be denied that in order to retain its place within Iranian society, and inside the Iranian government, the British Company had, in my opinion, more power than the British Embassy in London. The British Ambassador received instructions from Abadan rather than from London.
WOMAN

Was the Company involved in the political scene in Iran? What were they doing concerning the internal politics in Iran?

BAKHTIAR

That wasn't the only thing. First of all, corruption, corrupt journalists... sold... all the time... all over the country. Then there was a kind of influence practised in the elections, in forming governments, in Court circles, at the time of the Reza Shah and Mohamad Reza Shah. All this was obviously going on around the Anglo Iranian Oil Company, as you say. There was in fact a, could I say - a sort of mystery - mysterious state inside the Iranian state which existed at that time. So claims were made, especially after the departure of the Reza Shah and the arrival of a great number of intellectuals and young people trained in Europe, in France, like in England.

WOMAN

Can you tell me what happened when you went to London to see Mr Fraser?
I was there in Abadan, and long before arriving there, I had put forward certain conditions. I said that if for instance the workers were laid off without reason, I proposed a law should be made to change be made. I must say that the Labour Party in general did a lot about that. I think I have already told you of course that the government were not listened to by the British Company or Sir William Fraser or other directors, Elkington or others. But, in general, Mr Attlee's government tried to improve relations between the Company and the Iranian workers there. Only, these changes couldn't finalised given that for thirty years such a staff, such a corps existed in Abadan, and every time one wanted to talk about something new - in the interests of the workers, the old timers said: "Twenty years ago, so and so..." So I said, "Twenty years ago is finished. You must begin the new deal."

So we were always at loggerheads.
I arrived in Geneva for an international conference, and I was invited by AIOC to go and see the Landes oil refinery, and at the same time to see the director, and Sir William Fraser, who was chairman at that time. We talked together and I insisted, before anything, on the question of housing for the workers. Some had decent quarters, perhaps, but the vast majority were living in what we call 'bidonvilles' (shanty towns). Living conditions for these workers were absolutely unbelievable, and above all, we knew that Britain, that is the Company, was making a lot of money. So I went to talk to these men, I met Mr Gas Elkington and Sir William Fraser himself. I was in London for about two or three days to see these gentlemen.

What did Mr Fraser say to you when you spoke to him about the accommodation and the water?

Yes, I discussed accommodation and water. Obviously there was a slight increase in the wages which wasn't a lot, but at least it was better than nothing. Then a scale, that is a level for salaries. If unskilled labour was getting around 100, higher grades would get 250 - as an example. This is at the time I am talking to you about and it wasn't the only time. I had to struggle a long time for it, but let me reiterate, the situation was, in my opinion, that top management in the Anglo Iranian Company
were not aware and did not have their eyes
open enough to the immense changes that
had taken place after the war. They didn't
see Nehru, Gandhi and all those huge transformations
in the world - they were shortsighted, they couldn't
see very far ahead - that's it.

**WOMAN**

So what were the changes, the political
goals, economic goals, that you wanted at
at the time of nationalisation of the oil?
And that Mossadegh wanted to bring to Iran.

**BAKHTIAR**

Listen, the problem is very simple: if you
find that a nation is free in its destiny
or what we call in France national sovereignty,
then the government has the right to nationalise
any company. Now at that time in England,
Attlee's government, who themselves had nationalised
certain industries - the coal industry, I think, or
what is it called - or the steel industry, big
nationalisation, so why had England the right
to do at home the same nationalisation - and
why not us, in our own country, with a British
company?
So you found it was not between two blocs - that is, it was not Britain and Iran, but Iran and a private company. So we said, what you can do in your country, then we have the right to do in our country, of course, you need a brave man to say that, that is, Mossadegh.

What did he really want - did he want more money or did he want ... sovereignty?

Listen that was a long time ago. When you are the sovereign you can use your wealth. When you are not, you cannot.

One of the British reactions at that time was to threaten Abadan with military occupation to get their oil back, their oil they thought... what would have been the result of such action if they had done that?
I think that Britain at that time, especially with a Labour Party, would not have been able
to do that. Certainly, remember, there
were some people, when India got her independence,
Winston Churchill, was a respected man, said
give me sixty thousand soldiers and I will
reconquer India - I find that more a joke
than anything else but likewise I
believe that the occupation of Abadan and south Iran
would immediately have brought Russian occupation
of the rest of Iran - because unfortunately a Treaty,
indeed extremely unfortunately, a Treaty of 1921
authorised the Soviet Union to do that.

Consequently, here, the Americans opposed, saying
"Don't do that". But to intimidate them they
sent the warship "Mauritius", which was
I must tell you that
was in the bay of Abadan. All this was after
my departure for Teheran or right after the act of
Nationalisation of oil.

Thanks. We must stop now as the film has
finished. Thank you very much. It was very good.
WOMAN

My Bakhtiar, to the British, Mossadegh was perhaps charming, but an actor, a demagogue, a bit ridiculous - not really someone equipped to govern Iran. What is your opinion?

BAKHTIAR

Listen, these are probably things that we attribute to people from other countries, we said the same thing about Gandhi. He was ..............

I don't know what that means in English, but I know a well known Englishman said the same thing. The most important thing is to have the intelligence to understand the mentality of people from other countries. If I can understand you - good ..............

Mossadegh had his style, of course, like everyone has his own style - his own ways of thinking, but Mossadegh's essential role wasn't the nationalisation of oil. The respect that I personally have for him and that the vast majority of Iranians of my generation had for him was that he gave a lesson in democracy and nationalism, and on this democratic line. And on nationalism, he went on to nationalisation of oil. So he was charming, no really he wasn't charming at all, on the contrary as you say, he had no personal charm at all, uprightness he had an rightness, an honesty that made a contrast to the political circles in Iran at that time. He wasn't a man to be bought. He was a man of integrity, from a large aristocratic family, quite rich, who had a distain for money and ...
BAKHTIAR  cont

talk of him like I do, his enemies talk like the person you spoke to me about.

History will judge...

WOMAN

Something else that was said - that he was a bit too old, a bit senile, a bit crazy...

BAKHTIAR

I saw Mossadegh four years later, during the trial, and I think at that time he had the spirit and mind of a man of forty. But again, his manner, gestures...

but look at Gandhi, you've seen the film Gandhi, I have had the pleasure of seeing it here. Well you see Gandhi coming down with his next to him, with his mannerisms, well, I think Mossadegh was much more europeanised than Gandhi, much more.

WOMAN

His thesis on the negative balance, could you explain to us briefly what that was?

BAKHTIAR

it is very simple, in general. When there is a power next to you and another power on the other side, if you give more to this one, the other one will demand even more. The day when nationalisation of oil was put into action, Mossadegh asked the Soviets to terminate the question of the fisheries in the North, what we call over there the Caspian Sea Fisheries,
In giving less to one person, the other demands less from you, but if you give more to America, the Soviet Union will say "What about me". Mossadegh's theory is to give more balance, more space to manoeuvre, it means precisely to be able to give less to a foreign power because the other also is asking for less.

Thank you. So what were the workers, the employees of the Company doing, because Mossadegh wanted to introduce a law against sabotage. Could you tell us briefly?

Well, it is simple. Knowing the importance of the oil installations in Abadan, the ... in Loli, in other areas of Iran, in the Bakhtiari mountains where I myself originally came from, well, we were afraid of sabotage not only from certain British agents but from the Tudeh agents, because the Soviet Union did not look favourably upon the nationalisation of oil, and until the end it was opposed to nationalisation in all the international meetings, at the Council of Security, in the International Court of The Hague etc.
WOMAN
And why did he finally expel the employees from Abadan?

BAKHTIAR
Listen, I don't think he expelled them, it is not really the right word. Mossadegh tried with different delegations, who came there, the Jackson Mission, the Stokes Mission, and others who came to discuss it. The British said "we agreed with you for some sort of nationalisation," then Mossadegh told them "nationalisation has one law, this law must be applied, are you for it or against nationalisation?" So on that, Mossadegh really wanted to keep all the British and especially the management of the Abadan refinery, with its general manager. He asked for it and insisted on it. The general manager, with the same favours, advantages, the same favours they were getting with the other British in Abadan, or in the fields area, could stay at least 5 years, then gradually use others. But the British didn't want that because they said if we accept that then we have agreed to the nationalisation of oil as in the judicial Plan.

WOMAN
Did you really, for Mossadegh and for yourself at that time in the National Front, have the feeling that the British wanted an agreement with Mossadegh?
BAKHTIAR

I personally think so, yes, especially at the beginning, especially with the Labour Party. There were/elements in the Labour Party - maybe even Stokes himself, who didn't have very much respect for the British politics at the Embassy in Tehran, and as I told you, there are texts in Prime Minister Attlee's memoirs which say "I don't understand, we are asking...the, I, the British Prime Minister ask for the balance sheet of a British Company, and they refuse to give it. But it wasn't just an Iranian state of affairs, it was British also. There wasn't any respect over there either. Consequently it wasn't their fault. The British some British, wanted to, but others of course objected.

WOMAN

Mr Bakhtiar, could you tell us about Qavam events. Why did Dr Mossadegh resign in July?

BAKHTIAR

Mossadegh came to the Security Council. He had pleaded Iran's cause. Britain was saying that world peace was threatened. Mossadegh answered: "Why would the nationalisation of oil threaten world peace?" After several talks they said: "Let's await the answer from the International Court of the Hague, as it was in session then. So Mossadegh went back to Iran. there was an affinity, certainly of Anglophile elements, I say Anglophile, it is not the word... valets, friends, yes, I have nothing against the British, not against British culture
BAKHTIAR who for years and years had raised a class of valets. People started a kind of plot in the Court when Mossadegh was in the Hague etc. they found a way. At that time Mossadegh had asked the King for the right to decide on his ministers. I think it is entirely constitutional. I myself told the King "I must choose my ministers myself. If you are not happy about it, I am going." It was the same about the minister for Defence. Mossadegh requested that the Minister of Defence be nominated by himself. The King refused and Mossadeh resigned.

WOMAN And at that time you were in the National Front? What did you do after the nomination of Qavam as Prime Minister?

BAKHTIAR Well, we could very well see, very clearly, that the very great majority of Iranians were for Mossadegh. We weren't the only ones. And we were decided, not against the British Company, but against the absolutism of a monarch who doesn't respect the constitution. We then said that we were going to march in the streets, and
and we insisted three days in a row and on the fourth day Qavam was out.

What was the atmosphere like during those riots? You were there I think.

Yes, I was indeed there. I got hit too. I was young and strong then and I think that the people were really in favour of Mossadegh then and supported him very loyally and that Mossadegh symbolised National Unity - which you saw happen in other countries en other occasions. But one thing which is very important, is that the day Mossadegh came back to power, that day the international court......

WE  
Mr Bakhtiar, could you tell us about the atmosphere, describe what happened on the third day in the street? On the third day...there were riots the first two days...

not only in Teheran but in other cities, and we sent a telegrams to Mossadegh, who was staying at his place not far from Tehran. But on the third day, as the military government was there group meetings absolutely forbidden, but we still decided to go
BAKHTIAR ahead. And starting at eight oclock people-
from different backgrounds and different social
classes gathered in the different streets
that join on to the big square in front of
parliament. And it was impossible to find any room
in this enormous square. Of course at first
the army didn't shoot, but having given
some warnings they started to shoot, so
we moved back to the streets, forming large groups
again. That lasted about seven hours, from
eight in the morning until three in the afternoon. After 3 o'clock
I don't know who made the King realise that it
was impossible, and that there were already
dozens of deaths, and that consequently he must
give in.

WOMAN Thank you. In his second government, Mossadegh
himself wanted to become Minister of Defence. Why?

BAKHTIAR He had resigned because of that, because the
army wasn't under his direction, because the
high command was not answerable to the Prime
Minister. You see it is impossible in a Democracy -
in a country which has a constitution, your minister
of Defence answers to Mrs Thatcher I believe, not
BAKHTIAR to Queen Elizabeth. So why not us? That's why Mossadegh said "I am responsible, it is I who must give the orders."

WOMAN Did Mossadegh think about unseating the Shah?

BAKHTAIR Never. That is heresy. It is truly the worst lies from people around the King, in his surroundings, unfortunately, as the King wasn't strong enough and hadn't enough discernment - he wanted to reign and govern, but for us, the Shah must only reign. So, consequently we went to tell him they want a solid republic, false: I have two very thick documents. never did Mossadegh mention the word republic. Never was he for a republican Iran.

WOMAN Thank you. Could you tell us about Truman when he sent a message, it was said, to Doctor Mossadegh. I believe that you were there yourself.

BAKHTIAR Yes, I was there. Mossadegh came to the meeting of the council of Ministers, and he told us: "Truman has sent a message saying: because I am going to leave, it is the second time I have been elected in the United States, and that the next election will perhaps be won by the conservatives. It will
BAKHTIAR cont

harder to settle with the Conservatives, so in one word, I am suggesting, if possible, for you to settle with them. It was the message from Attlee, sorry, from Truman to Mossadegh.

WOMAN

Did Mossadegh ever really wish to come to an agreement with the British?

BAKHTIAR

Yes, I believe that Mossadeh was, still, until the end, on the point of concluding an agreement but the Conservative government at that time had had the considerable advantage of negotiating with the American government, and the American ambassador, Mr Anderson of the State Department of whom the chief was Mr Dulles who was the legal adviser of a British company. So that is self explanatory.

WOMAN

Why didn't he accept the proposal from Truman and Churchill at the time?
Because he wanted to know one thing: he said: I am giving an indemnity to the British for the installations, I will pay even before nationalisation, exactly the price of the stock price on the stock market, like all countries, but I cannot go for paying for missing gains, if we were there until the end of the contract we would gained so much, that doesn't mean to be nationalised.

The economy without oil is a phrase that one heard at that time. What did Mossadegh want to do with it?

He didn't want to produce it, he wanted to sell the oil, but the British............. wanted the........ We sent, some people sent.... ....... and there were some ships that were...... and others in ballast, and each time, before the Court and during the trial we were the winners. But England had the strength, to the ships and people didn't want to come, so the Americans with the British, the French, the Dutch and all that met and formed the consortium. Only the Italians and the Japanese helped us.
WOMAN Did Dr Mossadegh and you in the Council of Ministers, think it was possible for Iran to live without the oil?

BAKHTIAR It is always possible, Madam, to live without the oil, but we live in misery. But has Japan any oil? Has Turkey any oil, next to us? One can survive without any oil, but when you have oil, one should be able to use it as well. Why not?

WOMAN The British naturally were saying that Mossadegh didn't understand well enough the complexities of the oil industry, that he also changed his mind all the time. That he wasn't.

BAKHTAIR Changing his mind, I don't think so. But I believe Mossadegh probably didn't understand very well. But why did they want him to understand the complexity of the oil phenomenon, especially from the commercial point of view, the big trusts, the powerful interests that are involved when we are talking about an oil company of course in thirty years the world had changed, but bad
things which happened to Mossadegh happened at the most critical moment in the history of the oil—a little earlier or a little bit after it would have been different.

Thank you. Could we then talk a little about the opponents of Mossadegh in 1953? First of all Princess Ashraf?

I believe, that I wrote and I can only repeat it, that this person had, from the beginning till the end of modern history of Iran, a disastrous and detestable influence.

Could you repeat that in a sentence, better, please, of Ashraf because....

I think that Ashraf exercised an a detestable for influence/the last thirty years, not only to the detriment of her country, but even in the royal regime itself in Iran.
And at that time, in 1953, she wasn't in Iran - was she expelled? What was she doing?

Three days after, the arrival of Mossadegh in the government, he went to see the King and asked him to send that Princess away from the frontier. In other words, an undesirable person. So she was away, but she came back sometimes to foment a plot etcetera.

But what was she really doing at that time? Why?

What was she really doing? Actually Princess Ashraf was trying to help - even after all the misery her brother went through, the same people, with the corrupt, who were outside Iran, who were preparing plots against the nation.

And Zahedi, General Zahedi. Could you tell us anything about him?
I don't know him personally because we are not the same age and of course I was not really in touch with him, he was was rather a brave General it was I'm told by others, and had ambitions too. But the British considered him as Germanophile during the war - it might have been possible. But he had very close associations and contacts more and more with the Americans and it was them who pushed him, I would say, to become Prime Minister.

And the Ashradian brothers, what did you think of them and what were they doing at that time?

Well it was an Anglophile family, of course, and whose father had a job at the British Embassy in Tehran, and of course if possible were anti-Mossadegh and pro-British politically. Everyone knew that.

I don't know if it would be possible for you to describe the Shah's coup in 1953. What was the Shah doing at that time?
BAKHTIAR The Shah, before Mossadegh and after Mossadegh, Madam, never thought of his role as a constitutional monarch. All this troubles came from that. So the Court, the more corrupt the Court became, the more the sordid the intrigues became, and the more distant the people became from the Court, and the King became isolated and that isolation ended with the Khomeini phenomenon.

WOMAN Thank you. Can we stop there? I want to.

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WOMAN Mr Bakhtiar, why did you decide to break off diplomatic relations with the British in October '52?

BAKHTIAR Well, first of all, I think it was Mossadegh who decided and not me. But after all diplomatic relations were there to be of some help. When one is in open hostility, or almost, and then Mossadegh considered that the presence of an embassy in Tehran, and of consulates in the south and in Isparan weren't really in the interest of Iran any more. And so it wasn't necessary
............ the oilmen who wanted to buy some oil from us. So he took this decision mainly to show that he wasn't going to give way, and also that it was roughly what the man in the street wanted.

WOMAN Was he suspicious at that time about the British desire to unseat him or not?

BAKHTIAR The British always wanted to unseat Mossadegh even at the beginning almost, but not particularly at that time, especially since in October 1952 Mossadegh was at the top, he had won the International Court of the Hague, he won the Council of Security, and the Abadan installations, and other places where the oil was extracted from were functioning very well, but there were not enough buyers.

WOMAN Then, during the year 1953, Mr Bakhtiar, was Mossadegh losing control of the situation? Was there a danger that communism was coming to Iran?
The danger of communism was happening everywhere Madam, it is exactly like microbes in the body. When the body is weak, the microbes win, when the body is strong the microbes stay where they are. So this is the general theory. But Mossadegh was never communist, never had any sympathy for the communists, never accepted, being a democrat that he was, because there is a fundamental thing between a communist and a non-communist, it is democracy. That is the fundamental problem, but I am for socialist reforms etcetera... so Mossadegh never wanted to collaborate with the... only the groups that already existed, the Court with the secret agents from the West, the people who were in Iran before Mr Roosevelt, and others made plots every day. One day when the King who himself decided to leave Iran, they raised the...... an incredible story... the Shah wanted to leave Iran and Mossadegh was telling him, don't leave, we need your presence here, because I myself was there when this discussion took place, the Mullahs were always the same then, it is for that reason that I hate their involvement in the administration. That is to double for me. The Mullahs, corrupt, the ones who were thrown out of the administration, all got together and organised plots, the first one didn't succeed, nor the second one, the third succeeded.
WOMAN: But with the economic difficulties that Mossadegh went through, at that time, and the fact that he asked for a loan, urgently, to the Americans, do you think that the situation was losing control?

BAKHTIAR: He wasn't losing control, but the situation was not very healthy of course, paying them every day, the workers who weren't working in the oil industry, so you can understand... and during two and a half years we were paying that daily, so I believe that even a rich country would not be able to stand that.

WOMAN: Do you think that the Americans were right that if Mossadegh wasn't thrown out, the Tudeh would take over?

BAKHTIAR: Certainly, even if it was their conviction it was..... like when they made a mistake with Khomeini.

WOMAN: Why didn't the Council of Ministers and Mossadegh want to resist the coup d'etat on the 19th of August?

BAKHTIAR: This is the thing that I will never forgive them for.

WOMAN: Could you tell us what happened?
Well what happened was very simple. At midnight 25 tanks and machine guns were sent back with an officer who was Nasiri, a Colonel from the Royal Guard - telling Mossadegh that he was out. So Mossadegh wrote on the envelope 'received and I will decide'. At one o'clock in the morning he gave his resignation. Then when we saw tanks - one doesn't have to come with tanks in the middle of the night to ask for the resignation of a minister. Mossadehg should have reacted immediately, and by martial law killed all the people who were involved in this story. Unfortunately I wasn't a Mossadeghist. He didn't have enough determination, and he might then have been very tired with so many intrigues and so many things, and he let it go for three days and the third day, of course, money was spent in large amounts in Iran, and all the crooks and - excuse me - the prostitutes, all the terrible things done and seen in Tehran at that time, rushed to Mossadegh's house. It wasn't, Madam, ...... end of tape ...

... There will be a coup d'etat. How did he find out? I really know how. The Tudeh Party offered to collaborate with Mossadehg but Mossadegh refused saying that he would rather stay in touch with the Occidental powers rather than let ...... down, on the Persian Gulf. I didn't want that. The Tudeh didn't collaborate and the drama happened.

AT that time making a coup d'etat against Mossadegh was quite dangerous for the Americans wasn't it?
BAKHTIAR  It was dangerous, of course, but it was prepared for about a year. with rehearsals and, like the landings in Normandy, were rehearsed several times so as to be successful.

WOMAN  How did you yourself find out that the Americans encouraged the new regime?

BAKHTIAR  Because the Americans, in less than 24 hours, gave 50 million dollars to Mr Zahedi, the new Prime Minister, and what is more interesting and shows the soviet's mentality, the soviets who owed us money, we had given ours in Russia, during all the time Mossadegh was in power, they refused to give it back, but gave it back to Zahedi, and there are still now some imbeciles in Iran who believe that the higher Tudeh Party is for the greater interests of the Iranian people.

WOMAN  And to end, Mr Bakhtiar why didn't the Mossadegh experience succeed?

BAKHTIAR  I think that in general, Madam, the experience succeeds if it gives an idea, a clue to follow. If Mossadegh wasn't there, if this first attempt wasn't made, a lot of things would not have happened. Mossade gh gave the signal for a new era, we didn't immediately take advantage, but after us, others came and wasted the money that
BAKHTIAR: The nationalisation brought, and you know the rest. But I have to add, to finish, that the example is an example that will remain in the history of Iranian nationalism, something very valuable. If he himself didn't succeed, well others will and I will end with the sentence, from a great writer, who said: 'it is better sometimes to be Prometheus than Jupiter'.

WOMAN: And finally as we still have a minute left, why didn't Mossadegh make the West understand that he was a man of the West?

BAKHTIAR: Well he was clumsy about that, one must be objective. I am not an admirer without any conditions. He was not knowing about these things.

WOMAN: Thank you very much, Mr Bakhtiar, it was very interesting......